

# Pedestrian bridge over Fox River 'will be built next year'

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Steve Lord

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[Aurora](#) Mayor Richard Irvin said a new pedestrian bridge over the Fox River will be built in the city in 2018.

That news came at an event Friday at Aurora University's Crimi Auditorium, where Irvin discussed his first 100 days in office and made some announcements about future projects as well.

He got a last-minute visit from Gov. [Bruce Rauner](#), who chose Aurora and the mayor's event as the place to sign the bill reauthorizing the River Edge Redevelopment Zone tax credit program through Jan. 1, 2022. The program allows for tax credits to redevelop historic buildings in downtowns along rivers in some of Illinois' older cities, including Aurora.

On his second day in office, Irvin testified before the General Assembly in favor of reauthorizing the program, and on his 100th day in office, Rauner came to Aurora to sign the bill — surrounded by legislators from both parties who sponsored it and helped promote it.

"That's partnership," Irvin said. "That's what we have to have here in Aurora."

One of the big announcements of the day was that the federal government has added another \$3.4 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality money to the \$8.2 million already secured by the city of Aurora for a project to redo the parking lot, relocate the bus pulse point and change the entrance to the Aurora Transportation Center and the Two Brothers restaurant and brewery at the Roundhouse.

The project includes a pedestrian bridge connecting the west and east banks of the Fox River over Blues Island, and connecting parking lots on the west side to RiverEdge Park. That bridge would allow commuters to use those lots.

The city also has received a \$2 million grant from the Forest Preserve District of Kane County because the pedestrian bridge connects the bike trails on both sides of the river.

Ken Schroth, Aurora's public works director, said the federal government told Aurora it would get the extra \$3.4 million for the project and also allowed the city to move the project up one year, from 2019 to 2018.

Schroth said Aurora can begin allowing bids for the project next spring, instead of a year later. The whole \$13.5 million project will take two years, he said.

As he stood below an artist's rendering of the bridge, Irvin announced to the crowd Friday, "The pedestrian bridge will be built next year."

Irvin also used the opportunity to allow West Aurora Superintendent Jeff Craig to talk about efforts to change the school funding formula downstate. He also introduced fire Chief Gary Krienitz and police Deputy Chief Keefe Jackson, who touted some of the things that have happened with their departments since Irvin became mayor.

Krienitz said that, in May, 19 new firefighters were sworn in; and recently four new police officers were sworn in, Jackson said. Police also have looked at developing an intelligence center for investigations and enforcement, have talked to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives about getting a machine to evaluate bullets used in crimes, and have looked at having a private law firm prosecute drunken driving cases to save overtime and increasing training for police — something the City Council is set to vote on next week.

"If you liked the first 100 days, there are 1,361 days left in Mayor Irvin's term," Jackson said. "Stay tuned."

Irvin also took the time to introduce and bring to the stage his mayor's office staff and had Alex Alexandrou, chief management officer, explain the new administrative setup that would have nine departments at City Hall.

During this time, while talking about a new Development Services Department that would combine development, permit and neighborhood services under one roof, Alexandrou announced that if the aldermen approve that reorganization, it will literally be under one roof.

Earlier this year, the city took over ownership of the former PNC Bank building at Benton Street and Broadway — some know it as the former Home Savings & Loan building — and Alexandrou announced the new Development Services Department would be housed entirely in that building.

Irvin said the new department would make sure people "have the ability to develop quickly."

"One Aurora equals one-stop shopping," he said.

Irvin had Adrienne Holloway, the new chief innovation officer, talk about the town meetings and other information-gathering events his transition team held. Holloway said so far there is a preliminary plan of highlights but that there will be a "more robust" final plan to show what Aurorans want.

"I wanted to make sure the transition wasn't just about me going into the mayor's office," Irvin said. "It's about transitioning Aurora."

Irvin joked that the first 100 days have been kind of a honeymoon for him.

"But as you know, every honeymoon comes to an end," he said. "I hope it doesn't. Everything I'm doing is for the greater good of Aurora. And recognize, this is just the beginning."

[slord@tribpub.com](mailto:slord@tribpub.com)